Introduction

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The *Critique of Practical Reason* is Kant's second foundational work in moral theory after the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Its stated aim is 'merely to show that there is *pure practical reason*' (*CpV* 5:3). That is, it attempts to show that reason by itself yields an objective principle of conduct that applies independently of individuals' preferences and empirically given aims – a principle that Kant identifies with the fundamental principle of morality – and thus to show that practical reasoning is not limited to instrumental and prudential reasoning as the empiricist tradition holds. To accomplish this aim, Kant tries to document the origin of the fundamental principle that underwrites common moral thought in reason (in 'pure practical reason') and to establish its overriding authority.

A 'critique' is a critical examination of a cognitive faculty that sets out its powers and limits, and in particular establishes the legitimacy of any a priori concepts and principles that structure the relevant domain of cognitive activity. Kant's views about the need for and proper focus of a critique of practical reason changed over time. When he published the *Groundwork* in 1785, he intended it to take the place of a critique of pure practical reason. He writes that although 'there is really no other foundation for a metaphysics of morals than a critique of *pure practical reason*, just as that of metaphysics is the critique of pure speculative reason', the need for the former is less urgent. That is 'because in moral matters human reason can be brought to a high degree of correctness and accomplishment', while the theoretical use of reason tends to overstep its limits and to make illusory metaphysical claims. Further, a full-blown critique of practical reason would introduce complexities that are not strictly necessary to present and to ground the authority of the basic principle of morality (*G* 4:391). The third section of the *Groundwork* is entitled 'Transition from Metaphysics of Morals to the Critique of Pure Practical Reason', and initially Kant thought that the arguments in this section were sufficient title for the pure practical or moral use of reason.

After publishing the *Groundwork*, however, while Kant was preparing a revised edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he decided to add a 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' as an appendix to that work, in order to respond to various objections to the *Groundwork* and to complete his critical system. But this appendix was not part of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* when it appeared in 1787. It was published instead as a separate work in 1788 – only now with the title *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant continued to think that while the existence of pure practical reason needs some vindication, it does not need critical limitation. Rather, once the existence of pure practical reason is established, only the 'empirically conditioned' use of practical reason needs a critique, in order to limit its presumption of supplying the only grounds of choice (*CpV* 5:16).

The organizational structure that Kant imposes on the *Critique of Practical Reason* is similar to those of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. The second *Critique* is divided into a 'Doctrine of Elements' that takes up the bulk of the work and a much shorter 'Doctrine of Method', and the Doctrine of Elements in turn has both an 'Analytic' and a 'Dialectic' of pure practical reason. The main concern of the opening chapter of the Analytic is to establish the authority of the moral law as the fundamental principle of pure practical reason. Chapter II addresses questions about Kant's concept of the good, and it defends his 'method' in moral theory of beginning with the concept of law rather than the concept of the good. Only by establishing that there is a practical law can one show that the necessity that is part of the common concept of duty is genuine. Chapter III is a detailed discussion of respect for the moral law as the moral motive, a topic that Kant had addressed only briefly in a footnote in the *Groundwork* (*G* 4:401fn.). This chapter explores the phenomenology of moral motivation and explains how the principle of morality functions as a motive, with an eye to substantiating the claim of Chapter I that pure reason is practical – that reason by itself yields practical requirements that can move the will. The Analytic concludes with a 'Critical Elucidation' that, among other things, explains its overall structure and sets out Kant's two-standpoint approach to the problem of free will.

The Dialectic introduces the idea of the highest good as the necessary final aim of moral conduct and argues that our interest in the highest good warrants assuming the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as 'postulates of pure practical reason'. The possibility of the highest good appears to generate an antinomy within practical reason that is resolved through these postulates. Without such beliefs we cannot conceive of the possibility of the highest good, and thus cannot rationally sustain the

commitment to its pursuit. In this way the second *Critique* contributes to and fills a lacuna in Kant's critical system, giving 'objective though only practical reality' to metaphysical objects that the *Critique of Pure Reason* had shown to be beyond the limits of human knowledge. The idea of a practical postulate is of interest as a form of rational belief whose warrant is not based on evidence, but rather on a set of practical interests that we are not free to abandon.[1]

The second *Critique* assumes the basic account of the fundamental principle of morality – the Categorical Imperative – given in the *Groundwork*, and many of the central ideas and theses of the *Groundwork* reappear in the Analytic of the second *Critique*, especially its first chapter. Both works assume that it is part of common moral thought that moral requirements carry unconditional authority, and their central arguments begin from an analysis of the concept of an unconditional requirement on conduct. To cite a few points of overlap, just as the *Groundwork* derives a statement of the Categorical Imperative from the concept of a categorical imperative (*G* 4:402–3, 420–1), the statement of the 'fundamental law of pure practical reason' in the second *Critique* (*CpV* 5:30) results from an analysis of the concept of a practical law (*CpV* 5:19). Both works argue that the fundamental principle of morality must, in some sense, be a 'formal' principle – a principle whose normative force depends on its form, and not on any end or purpose that constitutes the 'matter' of the principle (see *G* 4:400, 414, 415, 416 and *CpV* 5:27, 39–41). Moral theories that base their fundamental principle on an object given to the will – whether it be an object of the senses or one thought through reason – lead to 'heteronomy' and are unable to ground true categorical imperatives or practical laws (see *G* 4:441–4 and *CpV* 5:21–2, 39–41). Thus both works argue for the analytic claim that only a principle of autonomy – a principle based in the nature of rational volition or one that the will in some sense gives to itself – can ground the necessity that is part of the common concept of duty (see *G* 4:432–3, 440, 444 and *CpV* 5:33). Finally, both works argue for analytic connections between freedom and morality – that a will with the capacity to act from the formal principle of morality is free, and that the principle of

[1] For more complete overviews of the main themes of the second *Critique*, see the introductory essays by Stephen Engstrom, in Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), xv–liv; by Andrews Reath, in Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), vii–xxxi; and by Heiner Klemme, in Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, ed. Horst D. Brandt and Heiner Klemme (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2003), ix–lxii.

morality is the fundamental principle that governs a free will (see *G* 4:446–7 and *CpV* 5:28–30).

There are also important points on which the works appear to differ, though how deep these differences run is a matter of controversy. In the third section of the *Groundwork* Kant attempts to establish the authority of morality through a 'deduction', and as part of the overall argument he appears to claim that we may ascribe a robust form of free agency to ourselves simply on the basis of general features of rationality, including theoretical rationality (*G* 4:448, 451–3). However, in the second *Critique*, Kant claims that a deduction of the moral law is neither possible nor necessary and that the authority of the moral law is instead given as a 'fact of reason' (*CpV* 5:31, 42, 46–7). Furthermore, he claims that only moral consciousness gives us grounds for ascribing free agency to ourselves; rather than seeking a deduction of the moral law, Kant now holds that the moral law is the basis of a deduction of the capacity of free agency (*CpV* 5:30, 47–8).

The composition of the second *Critique*, its main lines of argument and their relation to those of the *Groundwork* raise several questions. What led Kant to write a self-standing 'critique of practical reason'? What does Kant mean by a 'formal principle', and why does he think that the fundamental principle of morality must be a formal principle, or principle whose normative force comes from its form rather than its matter? What exactly is the 'fact of reason' and does it provide a satisfactory account of the authority of morality? How far-reaching are the differences between Kant's approaches to the authority of the moral law in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*? If he abandons the idea of a deduction of the moral law, where does he think that the earlier argument falls short? What is Kant's stand on the metaphysics of free agency in the second *Critique*, and how is it related to his views in other works, such as the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork*? The essays in this volume take up these and other questions that are central to understanding the aims of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, its central doctrines and contribution to moral theory and its role within Kant's critical system.

Heiner Klemme's essay, 'The origin and aim of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*', addresses the question why Kant decided to write a self-standing 'critique' of practical reason by turning to developments in Kant's critical philosophy in 1786–7. Klemme identifies two reasons for this change. First, in the spring of 1787, Kant came to believe that judgments of taste had an a priori character, and he planned a 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste' that later became the *Critique of Judgment*. This

development led Kant to modify his overall critical plan and to divide the project of a single 'critique of pure reason' into three separate critiques related to the faculties of understanding, practical reason and judgment. The *one* critique of pure reason is now presented in three works dedicated to (a) the constitutive use of the understanding and the speculative use of pure reason, (b) the constitutive use of pure practical reason and (c) the regulative use of the power of judgment in determining the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Second, Klemme looks for the genesis of the *Critique of Practical Reason* not just in its Analytic but in its Dialectic. He argues that Kant's discovery of an 'antinomy of practical reason' is a new development with no model in Kant's previous work, and that even with the 'fact of reason', the validity of the categorical imperative cannot be completely secure until this antinomy is resolved – requiring a separate 'critique' of practical reason.

Andrews Reath asks how to understand Kant's notion of a 'formal principle' in his essay, 'Formal principles and the form of a law'. Early in Chapter I of the Analytic, Kant claims that a practical law must be a formal principle – that is, a practical principle that provides a ground of choice through its form, rather than its matter. Further he suggests that fundamental normative principles must be formal principles. Kant explicitly argues that practical principles that provide a ground of choice through their 'matter' cannot provide laws or apply with true normative necessity, but he does not clearly explain why formal principles (in his sense), and only formal principles, do apply with necessity. Reath argues that Kant's conception of a formal principle is best understood not simply as a principle that involves some abstraction from content, but as a principle that is constitutive of some domain of cognitive activity – a principle that defines and makes possible and tacitly guides all instances of that kind of cognitive activity. So the formal principle of the rational or pure will would be its internal constitutive principle. Reath argues that understanding formal principles as constitutive principles establishes the connection that Kant sees between form, or formal principles, and normative necessity: a constitutive principle necessarily governs the relevant domain of cognitive activity and is not coherently rejected by anyone engaged in that activity. Reath develops this notion of formal principle, then considers how it figures in various central Kantian arguments – for example, that 'material principles of morality' cannot ground genuine laws and that a will governed by the formal principle of volition is a free will.

In 'Moral consciousness and the "fact of reason"', Pauline Kleingeld sheds new light on the significance of Kant's claim that moral consciousness

can be called a 'fact of reason' (*Factum der Vernunft*). Many commentators take this claim to indicate that Kant gives up his earlier aspiration of justifying the principle of morality, and instead adopts an unarguable point of departure. This reading often leads to the complaint that Kant now leaves his moral theory without a proper foundation, and that even if moral consciousness is universal, morality might still be an illusion. Kleingeld argues that the hermeneutical key to a better interpretation lies in the proper understanding of the meaning of '*Factum*'. Current interpretations of '*Factum*' as 'fact' fail to consider the etymological background. In Kant's times, the first meaning of the term was 'deed', and its second meaning was 'fact', understood as the result of activity. Against recent proposals to read it as 'deed' or as a technical term indicating a moment in Kant's proof structure, she argues that '*Factum*', as used by Kant, is best understood as a fact that is the result of an activity. Furthermore, Kleingeld argues that the consciousness at issue in the fact of reason should be understood fundamentally as the consciousness of a *rational* principle, namely, of the law of pure practical reason. The argument of the first chapter of the second *Critique* proceeds almost entirely in terms of practical reason and the fundamental practical law, not morality. Of course Kant identifies this fundamental law with the moral law, but highlighting his focus on a rational principle helps avoid the misunderstanding that he is simply presupposing a particular conception of morality. This reading of Kant's claims about the fact of reason makes it possible to answer the main criticisms voiced in the literature.

Jens Timmermann's chapter, 'Reversal or retreat? Kant's deductions of freedom and morality', concerns the differences between the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, published three years earlier – in particular their differences on the question whether the principle of morality stands in need of philosophical justification, as do the categories in Kant's theoretical philosophy. The third section of the *Groundwork* purports to contain such a 'deduction' and thus the core of a 'critique of pure practical reason'. In the second *Critique*, Kant explicitly rejects his previous conception of a 'critique of pure practical reason', comes close to admitting that his search for a 'deduction of the moral principle' was unsuccessful and deems explanation of the possibility of moral commands both impossible and unnecessary. Criticizing the practical faculty as a whole now reveals that the moral law is given as a 'fact of reason' and leads to a 'deduction of freedom' on moral grounds. Timmermann argues that the *Critique of Practical Reason* marks not just a strategic reversal, but also a retreat. The reason is that although many of the familiar doctrines and

arguments of *Groundwork* III reappear in the later work – the reciprocity thesis, the notion of 'transferral into an intelligible order', the idea that we conceive of ourselves as members of a normative realm – Kant is no longer willing to employ these elements in a formal deduction of the categorical imperative. A deduction would have to rely on the intuition of ourselves as members of a realm of autonomy, and according to Kant's own epistemic restrictions, no such intuition is possible. Thus Kant now realizes that the justification of morality cannot be assimilated to the transcendental deduction of the concepts of the pure understanding. Furthermore, the second *Critique* represents a retreat because what in the *Groundwork* is merely meant to *confirm* the correctness of the moral deduction now takes its place: since ordinary moral consciousness establishes that morality is real, the question of its possibility can safely be disregarded.

In 'The *Triebfeder* of pure practical reason', Stephen Engstrom explores Kant's account, in Chapter III of the Analytic, of how pure reason moves us to act through the moral law that it legislates, or how it is practical in human beings, in whom choice is subject to sensible impulses that may conflict with that law. Since the practicality at issue belongs to reason, it cannot depend on any special feature of our sensible nature that distinguishes humans from other sensible but rational beings. So the challenge is to show how the moral law can exercise an effect on the capacity to feel, and thereby become a spring of action, but without assuming any special capacity of moral feeling. In response, Kant describes certain natural attitudes that we have towards ourselves, claiming that our sensible nature includes a propensity of self-love, which also involves a propensity to self-conceit – an attitude of esteeming oneself in comparison with others. Since these propensities to love and to esteem oneself belong to us as sensible but rational beings, they take the form of tendencies to advance certain claims in which we deem ourselves worthy of the love and the esteem of others. Each person, however, being implicitly conscious of the moral law as the standard of validity for all such claims, recognizes that although love directed to oneself can be valid when broadened to include others, self-conceit, being essentially exclusive on account of its comparative nature, is inherently invalid and therefore to be wholly rejected. This recognition is in the first instance humiliating – a negative feeling expressing the passive side of the moral law's striking down self-conceit. But complementary to this humiliation is a feeling of respect for the moral law, a feeling that is positive in so far as the law is recognized as integral to one's constitution as a rational being. Observing that the diminution of self-conceit through this humiliation constitutes a furtherance of the moral law's efficacy, Kant points to

this distinctive feeling of respect as the moral law's effect on the capacity to feel, or pure reason's practicality as it operates in rational beings with a sensible nature.

Pierre Keller's contribution, 'Two conceptions of compatibilism in the Critical Elucidation', takes on the conception of free will in the second *Critique*. Kant rejects a standard form of compatibilism, according to which psychological freedom is compatible with causal determinism, because that conception of freedom is insufficient to ground moral responsibility. Instead he develops a more complex form of compatibilism aimed at reconciling a stronger 'transcendental' (incompatibilist) conception of freedom with causal determinism through a two-standpoint approach to action. Keller's essay explores the contours of Kant's more complex form of compatibilism. Keller discusses Kant's view that the ideal of complete explanation generated by theoretical reason requires the real possibility of uncaused causes, but that attempts by theoretical reason to make sense of this idea lead to antinomy. Only practical reason can give content to this idea, through the commitments of ordinary moral thought. Common-sense morality is committed to the existence of categorical obligations that apply unconditionally, and thus to the possibility of being motivated solely by the intrinsic reasonableness of an action, independently of antecedent considerations tied to one's spatio-temporal position. In this way moral agency supports a notion of 'absolute spontaneity' or transcendental freedom. Keller explores the limits that Kant sees to empirical or psychological accounts of free agency. He then shows how the two-standpoint approach that emerges from Kant's transcendental idealism attempts to reconcile a more robust notion of free agency with causal determinism. If the notion of a complete set of inquiry-independent causal conditions is a necessary illusion of inquiry, then the claim that unconditioned agency and causal determinism stand in antinomial relation to each other is itself illusory. Since the transcendental idealist views the idea of complete causal explanation as a regulative ideal that can never be fully carried out, empirical causal explanations are never complete. That leaves us free in principle to regard our actions in terms of normative reasons, that is, to adopt a different standpoint towards our action from that of deterministic causal explanation. Furthermore, the commitments of common-sense morality to normative reasons based on unconditional obligations require that we take ourselves to be able to act on such reasons. In this manner, common-sense morality's commitment to the moral law gives both warrant and content to unconditional reasons as causes of action.

In his discussion of the Antinomy of Practical Reason, 'The Antinomy of Practical Reason: reason, the unconditioned and the highest good', Eric Watkins draws on certain features of the Antinomy of Pure Reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to reconstruct Kant's argument and articulate its resolution. He then poses a number of basic questions about the concept of the highest good and develops detailed answers. The questions are: must there must be an object of pure practical reason at all?; must there be a *single* object of pure practical reason?; must the object of pure practical reason be the *highest good*?; could the highest good not be simply the supreme good rather than the complete good?; why must virtue and happiness be related by means of a one-way causal relation in the complete good? The resource that Watkins finds most helpful in addressing these questions is Kant's conception of reason, according to which reason searches for the totality of conditions, and thus the unconditioned, for any conditioned object.

Marcus Willaschek's essay is on 'The primacy of practical reason and the idea of a practical postulate'. In several places in Kant's work, most prominently in the Dialectic of the second *Critique*, Kant denies the unrestricted validity of the principle that rational belief requires evidence in favour of its truth. Rather, we can have rational warrant for a belief even in the complete absence of evidence for it, subject to two conditions. First, the belief must be 'theoretically undecidable': there can be no possible empirical evidence nor a conclusive a priori argument for or against the belief in question. Second, the belief must be 'practically necessary': someone who acknowledges the moral law as binding must, by a kind of subjective but still rational necessity, hold the belief in question. Kant calls a theoretical proposition that is both theoretically undecidable and practically necessary a 'postulate of pure practical reason', and he argues that there are exactly three such postulates – the existence of God, our own transcendental freedom and our immortality. With respect to these postulates, Kant holds that it is rational for us to *believe* in their truth even though they lie beyond the reach of human knowledge. In his essay, Willaschek concentrates on the general idea of a postulate of pure practical reason as a form of belief that is rationally held, though not based on evidence. He begins by laying out the special logical structure of the argument for the possibility of a postulate that Kant gives in the section 'On the Primacy of Practical Reason', then critically discusses and ultimately defends that argument. He considers the general idea of a postulate of pure practical reason and the epistemological status that Kant assigns to it. Finally, he suggests that the main idea behind Kant's argument does not depend on Kant's own, very demanding conception of morality.

Stefano Bacin's essay, 'The meaning of the *Critique of Practical Reason* for moral beings: the Doctrine of Method of Pure Practical Reason', addresses the philosophical role of the Doctrine of Method, the brief Part II of the second *Critique*. In order to underscore the functional connection of this part with the whole, Bacin begins by discussing the general meaning of 'a doctrine of method' in Kant's work, as well as the specific goals of the Doctrine of Method of the second *Critique*. The central section of the chapter focuses on the notion of 'receptivity to morality', which here has a central role and a quite distinct meaning. Bacin argues that Kant's main point in his account of how to 'make objective practical reason *subjectively* practical' (*CpV* 5:151) is that one ought to lead the individual agent to become aware of his own humanity, or fundamental dignity as a moral being, through an understanding of the basic concepts of the Doctrine of Elements. Awareness of one's humanity is the proper basis for conscious moral life. In Kant's view, recognition of this point is relevant to the overall aim of the second *Critique* – to show that pure reason is practical – and of moral theory itself. Kant believes that he has supplied a theory of moral agency that for the first time allows agents to understand their status as moral beings. The task of the Doctrine of Method is to show how it is possible to make agents aware of their basic moral capacities, and through that awareness to instil genuine moral dispositions. Accordingly, the Doctrine of Method is the completion of the *Critique*, confirming the conclusions of the Analytic through the common use of pure practical reason and connecting them with the experience of every moral agent. Bacin closes by discussing how Kant proposes to accomplish this task through exercises and examples intended to make agents aware of different features of their receptivity to morality. The 'science', or moral theory, developed in the first part of the *Critique* is thus connected with its final goal of a 'doctrine of wisdom'.